2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

b. The clothes of the family.

291 A man's dress is a piece of cloth, one cubit broad and five cubits long, this is to take round the loins; and to wrap oneself in they have a cotton shawl or an over-cloth, five cubits long and three cubits broad. If they are wealthy, they also wrap a turban cloth, some five cubits long, round their head. Poor people use a piece of cloth some two cubits long and half a cubit broad as a loin-strip, or they have a piece of cloth two and a half cubits long and one cubit broad as a loin-strip. And during the cold season they have a piece of cloth, some three cubits square, to wrap round themselves.

Women have only one piece, ten cubits long, of women's cloth; this they take round the waist and up over the back and breast.

Children stay naked, until they are eight years old; after this age boys get a loin-strip and girls a girl-loincloth.

302 Men arrange a hair-knot, and the women tie up their hair with a plait of cow's tail hair. All use a comb.

c. The ornaments of the Santals.

301 Formerly men and women, when they had reached some age, did not use ornaments. And the ornaments of young men and girls were only flowers. Nowadays all have earrings, whether women or men, whether boys or girls. Elderly men also use wristlets. Besides these, elderly men have no ornaments. Elderly women have wristlets, necklaces, and rings.

Young men have wristlets, necklaces, and rings, and when they dance they adorn themselves with hollow bells round the ankles, hollow ankle-rings, blue-jay feathers, and flowers. Girls adorn themselves with wristlets, anklets, curved anklets, thin toe-rings, great toe-rings, toe-rings with hollow bells, necklaces, rings, solid close-fitting necklets, solid neck ornaments, arm ornaments, upper arm ornaments, and flowers. On small boys and girls they put hollow anklets and small hollow bells.

d. Men's work.

462 221 From the month of Phalgun to the end of Baisak (i. e., from the middle of February to the middle of May) it is "sitting time". Then the men make implements for their own use and gather provisions for the household; then they make ploughbeams and yokes, ploughs, and clod-crushers, earth-shovels and cart-wheels, cart shafts and axles, neck-ropes and yoke-leather-thongs, hide-straps and ropes, spinning wheels and cotton-cleaning implements, handles for spades and pick-axes, axes and adzes, bedstead legs and frames, stools and wooden slabs to sit on, wooden ladles and spoons, bows and arrows, flutes, wooden pestles and mortars and weaving implements; they weave cloth and bedsteads, and they bring firewood and wood for the house, and they repair the house.

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

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From Jhet to Bhador (i. e., from the middle of May to the middle of August) they do agricultural work. Then they plough from morning to noon, and later on they work making ricefield-ridges and so on. First they sow millets and jungle corn, later janhę millet, maize, bajra, kodę, raher, ghaṅgra, and sutri[1]. After this they sow paddy for transplanting. They hoe the maize (in this the women help them). They do the first ploughing for paddy-planting; thereupon they plough the second time, thereupon plough the third time; they also make ready the ricefield ridges; they make the fields muddy and harrow; then they pull the paddy seedlings out. (To plant the paddy is women's work.)

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At this time they sow cotton and tilmiṅ oilseed[2] in the course of the month of Han (middle of July to middle of August). In Bhador (middle of August to middle of September) they plough the fields for hoṛǫć and aurguja[3] and sow these. They harvest the maize. In this work and in hoeing the cotton the women help them. They harvest the iṛi, gundli, kodę, and orba millets[4]. In this work also the women assist them. The men thresh.

In the month of Dasăe (middle of September to middle of October) they plough the homestead field where the maize was, and sow mustard seed, and they harvest and thresh janhę millet and the early paddy. In Aghăṛ (middle of November to middle of December) they dig and plane the threshing-floor, and together with the women they harvest the paddy, cut the bajra and tilmiṅ, cut the raher, pluck the ghaṅgra and sutri, and pull out the hoṛǫć and aurgujǫ. The women alone pull out the cotton. When the men have carted all this up to the threshing-floor, they spread it out on this, and joining cattle together they thresh. Having threshed out the seed they throw the straw away, having winnowed the grain they make a heap of it, and having twisted straw-ropes and straw-strings they put it into bundles. The other crops they beat out and put into bundles. Thereupon they cart all to their houses. In the month of Magh (middle of January to middle of February) they harvest the mustard and cut the thatching grass. Now the agricultural work is finished.

Besides all this work the men have all business with the money-lenders, and they pay the rent to the village headman. Men and women help each other to press oil in the oil-press. They do not make oil from the mustard and tilmiṅ; they sell this. They make oil from several kinds of fruit: kŭiṗḍi, baru, kujri, bando, boṅga sarjǫm, oraḍǫm, loṗǫṅ, koṛǫṅj, nim, and others[5].

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[1] Janhę is Panpalum sarmentosum, L.; bajra, Sorghum vulgare, Pers.; kodę, Eleusine coracana, Gaertn.; raher, Cajanus indicus, Spreng.; ghaṅgra, Dolichos Catjang, Willd.; sutri, Phaseolus calcaratus, Roxb.
[2] Tilmiṅ, Sesamum indicum, DC. [3] Hoṛǫć, Dolichos biflorus, L. Surguja, Guizotia abyssinica, Cass.
[4] Iṛi, Panicum Crus-galli, L.; gundli, Panicum miliare, Lamarck; kodę, Eleusine coracana, Gaertn.; orba, Setaria Italica, Kunth. [5] Kŭiṗḍi, the fruit of the Mahua tree, Bassia latifolia, Roxb.; baru, Schleichera trijuga, L.; kujri, Celastrus paniculatus, Willd.; bando, Spathodea Rheedyi, Benth.; boṅga sarjǫm, Vatalago calycosum, Talauma; oraḍǫm, Ricinus communis, L.; loṗǫṅ, Terminalia belerica, Roxb.; koṛǫṅj, Pongamia glabra, Vent.; nim, Melia Azadirachta, L.

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

a. Women's work.

462 The women are constantly working. Getting up at cock-crow they pound paddy. When
512 day dawns, they plaster the court-yard with cowdung. Thereupon they draw and fetch
262 water. They next give the gruel that is left from the previous day to the men and children. When these have eaten, they themselves take food. Thereupon they make up fire and put the midday meal food on the fire; they cook the rice, make curry; they pin leaf-cups and leaf-plates, ladle out the cooked rice, and when it becomes noon, they give the men
[283] and children their midday meal and afterwards eat themselves. From noon to the second time for drawing water (about 5 p. m.) they do different kinds of work, pluck vegetables, fetch leaves, and if they live near a forest, they go to fetch firewood, or they clear out the cotton seed in the carkhi[6], they clean the cotton with a bow[7], they make rolls of carded cotton on twigs, they spin on the spinning wheel, they wind the thread on their fingers, that the men may afterwards use it when weaving cloth. When it becomes the second time for drawing water, they go to fetch water, and then make preparations for the evening meal. Some two hours after it has become dark they eat. The women eat after the others. Meat they (i. e., all Santals) eat only now and then, mostly they eat cooked rice with vegetables and split peas. The spices for meat are turmeric, Anis seed,
[263] garlic, oil, and salt. The spices for fish are turmeric and mithi[8], and oil and salt; for vegetables and split peas only salt. They talk together about different matters while inside, thereupon they lie down to sleep. At the time of sowing and harvesting the women plant rice, hoe the maize, and when the paddy is ripe, they reap it. At the time of Dasão they make the house and door smooth: so there, this is the work of the women.

f. Children's work and amusements.

857 Until they are able to tend cattle, small boys only run about and play. When they be-
233 come fit for being cattle-herds, they tend cattle, also sheep and goats, together with the other village boys. In the morning they let the cattle out, and they tend them, two or
[234] three companions going together. They blow the flute, they hunt birds. At noon they
[223] take the cattle to a place where they rest, that they may themselves get food. When they have eaten, they drive the cattle out to graze, and when it becomes evening, they bring
234 the cattle to the village and take them in. At noon grown-up people milk the cows; they give the milk to the children; what is left they keep and add to it day after day and make clarified butter of it. To make clarified butter they boil the milk; having boiled it they let it become curds; these they churn mixed with water; thereupon they skim off the

[6] See Dictionary s. v. [7] This bow is now fairly rare. It is made of bamboo; at one end, the end kept in the right hand, it is compact; the rest is split and bent and a cotgut string is fixed so as to make it a bow. It is worked putting the bow-string down in the cotton and "playing" this with the thumb and index-finger of the left hand. [8] Trigonella Foenum-Graecum, L.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
[R63]

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC LIFE

The Santal traditions are silent as to whether Thàkur Jiu, after Man's first lapse at Khòj kaman, pronounced a curse on them that out of the sweat of their brow shall they earn their bread as on their Biblical prototype, but had He done so, it would have thrown some light on the strenuous struggle for existence of the Santal in this mundane world. Food, drink, shelter and the luxury of a fire have remained to this day as objects of man's instinctive worldly cravings, and Santals though no exception to the general rule, and while feeling the pinch like others, try to hide everything under a smile.

In this chapter, we propose to give the reader some idea of the material culture of the Santal on the basis of our enquiries in a number of villages in the state of Mayurbhanj[1].

The first item in the daily routine of the men is to rise from their sleep with the first grey of morning. They then have a wash and may indulge in a smoke of "puñgis" (*a home-made cigarette made of sal-leaves*). Now their fields call them, and on they

[1] The villages visited were Katsirsi, Andharia, Tursibani, Tentulbati (Muruda) and Tikaripara (Rairangpur).

Bi Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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462 512 go with their cattle to look after their agriculture. [264] It is about 9 a.m. that they can think of a breakfast, when the women convey to the fields a plate of [262] "Bàsiàm damari" (*rice soaked in water and kept over-*[263] *night*) which they eat with relish with a pinch of salt and some "sang" (*fried leaves*) generally of "sajina" leaves. Now refreshed with a meal, they work on till midday. The women are in the meantime busy with the hearth, cook and clean the yards and houses with cow-dung. The men return from [264] the fields at noon and bathe and eat their noon-day meal, again of soaked rice and "sang." Now the [515] women can think of their food and this they take [264] after a bath and after the men have dined, exactly [171] like their Hindu sisters. It is now time for men to take some rest. They loll on "parkòms" (*stringed bed-steads*) and doze for a time and are off to their fields at about 2 p.m. in the afternoon. There they [517] dig, plough or sow till 4 p.m., and after returning from the fields go round the villages, visiting friends or indulge themselves in village sports. Meanwhile, [264] their wives cook their supper, draw water and husk paddy and again at about 5-30 p.m., the family take dinner, the same menu being repeated. The children are fed first, the men next, the women, last of all.

With evening, the Santals as a tribe shut themselves indoors. If you ask them, "Why do you retire so early?" They will perhaps answer with a bland

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL FABRIC

462 171 The very existence of society depends upon the mutual co-operation of the sexes. This, however, varies from age to age and clime to clime. In Burma one will witness men-folk droning away their lives in fumes of cigar, while their fascinating mannish counterparts keep the balance by developing the male vigour for themselves. In rural Bengal one will see an opposite picture of women being gaoled in the hearth and home and not generally called upon to share the out-door life of the husband on quest of bread. But that the female can be the other half of the male, as the term a partner in life connotes, can be seen amongst the aboriginals, specially the Santals.

Division of Labour

462 22 Thus both the men and women can be seen in Mayurbhanj to hunt and catch fish, gather fruits and edible leaves. The Santal husband and wife 462 241 jointly engage in agriculture to transplant seedlings, to break clods and to reap corn. But here the roads part. Women do not sow seeds, but threshing is their special business and no man will undertake these tasks, unless he is without a woman member

31 Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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in his house. Ploughing, however, is an exclusive privilege of men; and women are debarred from it as a social taboo. The penalty for breach of this custom consists in a fine and ceremonial purification by the tribe. If you question a Santal on the genesis of the institution, he will tell you the myth that in ancient times when a woman first took the plough, the cattle in the yoke went on straight ahead and she could not make them deviate either to the left or to the right according to her will, when lo and behold, out opened a mighty river from under the furrows to the consternation of everybody.

In conjugal life, the women like their other Indian sisters are self-sacrificing. She will, we have already seen, eat last of all after feeding other members of the family. We asked a woman point-blank, "Why don't you dine along with men? Have you no such right?" "Our rights are equal," she answered with a genial smile, "but we choose not to exercise it." The way, however, she exercises her equal rights impresses one so much that the old Sirdar of Muruda, Mayurbhanj, was definitely of opinion that the Santal women work more than their male partners.

The equality of status, the woman claimed for her, extends to the drinking cup as well; but a distinction was drawn by her paradoxically enough when she blurted out, "We drink like men but do

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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562 not get drunk." Only if we had not seen women
293 babbling in drunken brawl with the introduction of the outstill system in the Santal Parganas, and had not educated Santals at Baripada told us an opposite tale, . . we could thoroughly agree with her sex-patriotism, if such a phrase is permissible.

562 In house-construction, however, the division of
347 labour has a nicety of its own, for, we learn, the
784 women cannot sit upon a thatch except on pain of
[783] social excommunication. Such a pollution can only be expatiated by *Pujas* to the god "Dhòròm." So
• [462] by its very necessity, house-building is man's
562 preserve. A quite similar taboo attaches to them
784 during funerals when according to custom, women
764 cannot accompany the procession beyond the limits of the village where the death occurred.

464 Santal men engaged in the police service were
625 highly spoken of by the Superintendent of Police,
159 Mayurbhanj, as efficient, obedient and hard-working. Asked if their drink-habit was not a hindrance to them, he was emphatic that it did not matter at all. Mr. Mahanty, a Deputy Magistrate, spoke in a similar strain about his Santal employees.

562 And we have seen women at work, at work
461 during the heat-wave of the Santal Parganas when all nature flies indoors, women singing at their work, punctual to a fault and hard-working to a painful extent. But, if her hour of work is seven a.m.

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on being abducted by force, these little pupils are made to command tigers so that they (pupils) may lose all fear. The next stage is reached when the students are led to the most powerful *Boṅgas* and are trained how to pray for their uncanny gifts and to become possessed. Thus emerges from the school, the full-fledged witch, holding a light in her hand and flourishing a broom tied round her waist. She is now formally married to a *Boṅga*, although, she may have a second husband in the person of a man in the social sense. 754

The curriculum thus completed, the witch is now awarded her degree (*Sid atang*) by pulling out a man's liver and eating it with her trainer. Should she refuse this cannibalistic meal, she will turn lunatic or meet with her death.

From the dozen stories in Mr. Bompas' collection, we learn that there are men also who learn the craft, and we read the strange protest of a man, who, after initiation into witch-craft, refused to eat a human being, because he was an orphan and had no relations to eat. The Santal social fabric is thus full of witches who marry men in disguise and merrily meet together at night to devise plans how to eat their kith and kin. And when they leave the beds of their Santal husbands to meet their *Boṅga* lovers, they keep behind a *Boṅga*-woman as a substitute-wife. But, it may be that the man 754 538 [462] [116]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

on a steep hill-side; when the wood of the felled trees is dry, generally toward the end of the hot season, it is burned. In this way the ground is cleared, and when the rains set in, the seed is sown without any ploughing. The present-day Paharias make small holes with a crow-bar and drop the seed into the holes, especially of bajra, Sorghum vulgare Pers., of maize and of a few other kinds. This is all, except that they may pluck away weeds. It is said that when the Santals in former times followed a similar mode of cultivation they simply sowed the seed (especially bajra) at the top of the cleared hill-side, the spreading being left to the water of the rains flowing down; in some cases, a branch of a thorn-tree (Zizyphus Jujuba Lam.) is said to have been pressed into a flat shape and dragged over the ground to spread the seed".

From early morning till evening they work in the field. Rice is their staple food; in it wealth is reckoned and from it they obtain their drink. Both sexes work in the field. Every man tries to secure agricultural fields near his house and also near a streamlet flowing. They cultivate their soil and also gather natural produce when their crops do not grow due to want of rain or for some other reasons. The Santals prepare two kinds of rice field. One type is adjoining their houses, the other is at some distance away from their houses, which is on high land.

Preparation of ricefield :— After selecting the site, the Santals clear the field of jungle and vegetation. Then they surround it with ridges but if the land is slopy then they make the ridge only on the lower side. With the hoe and a heavy leveller (karha) they

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

level the field as far as possible. With the help of plough the Santals plough the rice field several times before transplanting the rice seedlings. [243] [412] [407]

Transplantation :—In a rice field, during the months of May and June after making the earth loose they bring seeds in a basket and scatter them over the loose earth with the hand. Then the earth is again pressed down with the leveller and the seeds are thus buried in. When the seedlings grow to a certain height they are then pulled out and transplanted two or three together in the prepared field. They transplant the seedlings about one foot apart and in rows. They have three kinds of transplanted paddy. The earliest varieties ripen in the month of September. The second one, which they transplant in high land, ripens in the month of October. The third variety becomes ripe between November and December and is transplanted in low land. In the Santal Paraganas the Santals have got another kind of crop which is done simply by sowing the paddy seeds in the prepared rice fields and which ripen in the month of August. The transplanting is generally done by the Santal women. [407] [462]

Threshing :—When the crops grow properly and become ripe they cut them with sickle and carry them to a place which they clean with earth and cowdung. There in the centre they keep one big stone, on which they strike the rice saplings. Sometimes they use bullocks for threshing. A few bullocks, tied in a line, walk round and round on the spreading straw. With the above processes they separate the paddy from the stalk. Then with the winnowing fan they clean the paddy separating them from other impurities. [412] [231] [412]

4: Biswas D, E-3,4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

Oraons believed to be the heart, whilst amongst the Santals it is supposed to be the liver as our informant told us. Bompass also records an incident where a witch was surprised while extracting the liver from a body in order to eat it.[1] 754 171

Witchery through the evil eye is a belief rampant not only amongst the Santals but amongst other more cultured people of North-East India. It is also found amongst the Birhors, Hos and Oraons.

It is curious to observe how, though the Oraons have both male and female wizards and witches, the Santals ascribe this evil only to women. Their tradition, as recorded by Bompass, fully brings it out : 754 462 539

"Once upon a time Marang Buru (principal diety) decided that he would teach men witchcraft. In those days there was a place at which men used to assemble to meet Marang Buru and hold council with him, but they only heard his voice and never saw his face. One day at the assembly when they met Marang Buru he told them to come to him in their best and cleanest clothes for he would teach them witchcraft. All then went home and told their wives to wash their clothes well against the fixed day as they were going to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft. All the women made a plot to learn it by making their husbands drunk on the appointed day and they then wearing the dress of the males went off to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft in place of their husbands. They then went to Marang

[1]C.H. Bompass, op. cit., p. 421.

[2]C.H.Bompass, op. cit., p. 422.

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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Buru but Marang Buru did not detect the imposture and taught them witchcraft. After their return however their husbands came back to their senses and they at once went to Marang Buru to learn witchcraft. Marang Buru said "I taught it all to you this morning, what makes you come again." They were astonished at this and protested that they had not been to him at all that morning. Marang Buru said, 'Then you must have told your wives what I forbade you.' They gave an answer in the affirmative. Marang Buru then taught the science of *Ojhaism* and *Jan* in order that they might have some advantage over their wives, and be able to overawe them. This is why only women are witches and men are Ojhas and *Jan-guru*."

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Women, who are witches, of several neighbouring villages meet under some trees in a secluded place at some distance from human habitation generally on a Sunday at dead of night of a new moon. There, it is said, they strip themselves of their clothes and wear only the fringes of old brooms made of wild grass suspended from a girdle round their waists. Thus arranged the naked women hold the witches' dance. They have their peculiar secret songs and mantras, perform sacrifices and also try to kill people by magic very much in the same way as the old witches of Europe. It is particularly on the night of *Amawasa* (new moon), in the month of Kartic (October-November) that these witches' dances are celebrated with special eclat. Large companies of witches, it is said, move about that night and people are afraid of stirring out of their houses at a late hour that night. New girls are initiated on that night into the

M Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

for their timber. The *sarjom*, which predominates, is a valuable tree, but locally it has not been permitted to grow to any height. The trees are cut once in seven years and the timber is exported chiefly to supply firewood in the towns, while the leaf is used for the leaf plates required in city homes and food shops. This activity provides the main subsidiary occupation and is in full swing whenever work in the fields slackens, though it is not sufficient to keep the Santals at home throughout the year. Women share in the occupation; they help the men by stacking the timber as it is cut into lengths, and they collect the leaves which older women sew together while sitting at home. Other women, in the time they can spare from duties at home, collect the twigs and dry branches which they need for domestic fuel. Boys from about the age of seven are engaged in their occupation of tending the village herd of goats and cattle, for which they receive wages from the owners of one anna per month for each goat and two annas per month for each head of cattle in their charge. They are sometimes joined by the younger girls, but after the girls are nine or ten they stay with their mothers, look after the house or help to nurse the younger children.

Women play little or no part in the organization of social or religious life, but they are supreme in household affairs. Although men lay claim to superior intelligence and women openly disclaim any knowledge or interest in affairs outside the home circle, the attitude of the two groups towards each other is one of good-natured tolerance. In Barikul, at the close of a festival when there had been much drinking, the men were feeling unwell. Babulal reports: "Some of the men are saying: 'Yesterday I had nothing to eat, so give me something today.' To which the women reply: 'We have eaten all the food; you men are drunk!' And so they drank more beer and spirits, and became even more drunken than they had been the day before." In his diary entry for the next day he records: "Today all the drunks have begun to beg for some stale rice gruel. The women scolded them: 'You have earned a lot of food, haven't you? Why should you not go out to beg?' " After this chaffing the women relented and gave the men some food before they set out once more to their work. The Santal wife attends fairs and markets; she buys her own clothes and attends to the household shopping. The contrast between them and their non-Santal neighbours is heightened by the fact that they do not cover their heads. One end of the *sari* is thrown loosely across the breasts and over the left shoulder.

Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

As the days lengthen and become warmer, other activities find their place in the routine. When the first rain has fallen the men begin to dig up the pits of rotted cow manure beside their homes, carry loads of manure to the fields, and first plough the beds where the seed rice will be sown. At the same period they carry out repairs to their houses, and the walls of new houses begin to rise. Some walls are built by constructing a screen of thin sticks on which a mud plaster is fastened, but most of the walls are built by adding a layer of wet clay to the layers which have previously dried in the sun. Timber for rafters and posts is brought from the forest, and is not always paid for. Bamboos are cut and sliced; they are needed as a foundation for the thatch. Home-made rope is prepared. Rice straw is the material commonly used for roofing.

At this time some men devote their energies to trapping and snaring. A party of men may be formed for digging out a colony of field rats which will supplement the diet. Many varieties of bird traps and snares are in use. Some have insects attached to them as bait, with birdlime to snare the birds. Others are set on the ground to catch partridge with ingenious arrangements of slip-knots and a captive bird in the centre to act as a decoy. Some of the operations call for elaborate preparation. Nets are taken down from under the rafters where they have hung since the previous year. The men seek out pools of water which may be still left in some shady hollow of the forest when most of the water has dried, for there the birds will come to drink. Traps are formed by nets, or by baskets attached by a string to where one of the men sits waiting to pull it and entrap the bird. On an April day in Barikul two parties of men set out on trapping expeditions. One of them went to a distant forest and returned with three peacocks. The other party spent the day near the banks of a nearby stream and gathered three-score birds, including doves, grey partridges, Indian drongos weaver birds and crow pheasants, all of which are eaten by the Santals.

At the same season the women find new employment. One of the commonest of the trees growing in the villages, the fields and the forests is the *mahkom* (*Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.); it has thick sepalled succulent flowers during the spring. These flowers fall from the trees during the early hours of the morning, and the women and girls rise early to collect them. They are used in a variety of ways. When dried they provide either a nutritious cattle food or a supplement for human diet. They are used in

5t Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

preparing the cakes which the men take with them at the time of the hunt. The flowers have a high sugar content, and their most common use is in the distillation of spirits, the *pạurạ* or brandy of the Santals. The work of distilling is carried on by one or two families in the village, and they sell not only to their fellow villagers, but they operate illegal liquor shops on market days. *Matkom* beer, a drink which is only slightly fermented, as it is prepared within twenty-four hours, is refreshing, but it is used chiefly for the purpose of counteracting the after-effects of a drinking bout.

The women prepare the rice beer which is brewed in all the homes. First they collect the roots that are used as fermenting agents from the forest. In this, as in most of their gathering activities, the women of the village work together. There is a certain ceremonial attached to the gathering of these roots. Parties sometimes consist of women from more than one village, and so a day for the expedition has to be fixed. The procedure suggests that this is regarded as the women's counterpart to the hunt. Before the wood is entered one of the older women invokes *Gōsāē* ("Lord", a general term used in addressing the spirits) and requests that they be led quickly to the places where they will find the desired plants. The first woman to light upon one falls on the ground, pretending to be drunk. These roots are known by the general name of *rạnu ran*, "medicine of medicines". It takes three days for the beer to mature or "cook". It cannot be stored, so it is brewed fresh for festival occasions and also in the majority of houses as often as the family can afford. *Hạnḍi*, or rice beer, occupies an important place in the ritual as well as in the social life of the tribe. It is essential for all libations to the spirits. A myth relates how the secret of brewing beer was imparted to the first human beings by the chief spirit of the Santals himself. It is therefore the indispensable Santal drink. It is extremely difficult for a Santal to understand not only how a person can live without beer, but why he should try to do so. The case of Pitam, who lived near Benachapra, illustrates this. He was a man of great influence because of his powers as a witch-finder. He had, however, abandoned some of his tribal ways, and, influenced by Vaishnava Hinduism, he had given up meat eating and the drinking of intoxicants. During the annual tribal council some of his enemies charged him with undermining Santal society, and one of the counts against him was that by abstaining from beer he was doing harm to the spirits.

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273 It would be a mistake to suggest that the attitude of the Santal towards intoxicants is one of simple approval. There are two standards at work. There is, on the one hand, the almost universal acceptance of the habit, reinforced by its sanction in mythology, the social function that it does fulfil and the fact that it is a form of food. There is also, on the other hand, a recognition somewhat grudgingly given to the undesirable consequences of the habit. It leads to a loss of working days, to [178] quarrels and offences against the moral code. Most informants agree that the drinking habit has increased in recent years. Such a statement must be regarded with the suspicion appropriate to all attempts to glorify the good old days. It does, however, imply the existence of a critical attitude. The earliest records, which indicate conditions a hundred years ago, all mention the drinking habits of the Santal as phenomenal. It is probable that the drinking of spirits in preference to beer has grown during the time when the Santals have been drawn more completely into a money economy, and it is certain that the Congress boycott in 1930 gave more than a temporary impetus to illicit distilling. Nevertheless, there is further evidence of [522] moral judgments being applied to drinking. The habitual [558] drunkard is a figure of fun and regarded with contempt. The drinking of rice beer does not lead to much intoxication except during festivals. A woman who drinks to excess is considered to be loose in other respects as well. People frequently complain that whereas formerly only the old men and women used to drink, now everyone does so. It would be easy, however, to overdo the picture of a Santal conscience in these matters, for they are a pleasure-loving people and drink is associated with their pleasures. The common attitude was well expressed by an old woman who had been asked to sing when she replied: "I cannot sing without beer."

221 The annual hunt takes place during the hot season. This 224 institution is still vigorous wherever there are Santals living • [462] within reach of a forest. Hunting is regarded as the characteristic activity of the male. When the date of a hunt has to be [634] fixed, the responsibility for the arrangements and for making it known through the area rests with the *parganath*. The date may be fixed in different ways; each *pargana* follows its own 221 tradition. In three adjoining localities the following three 224 traditions are observed. In one the hunt is held always on the 184 seventh day of the month of *Baisakh* (April-May). In the second it is held on the day of the full moon in the same month.

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month. The date of the third is arranged while the first hunt is in progress, and it is announced by means of a *giṛa*. This is a method of reckoning dates or announcing future events. It may be used in connection with a hunt, but it is also used to announce a forthcoming marriage or a burial feast. It consists of a length of string in which a number of knots are tied, each knot representing one day. A number of *giṛa* are distributed to the surrounding villages during the weekly market, and they are kept by the headmen, who untie one of the knots each evening until one knot remains, when they know that the hunt takes place on the morrow.

Although the ritual meaning of the hunt has been obscured in the minds of the Santals, it is implicit in much that accompanies it. A hunt is the activity of the whole adult male population of the area. Women are not permitted to take part, but certain taboos must be observed by them while the men are away from home, to avert the lurking dangers of the forest. The prohibitions are similar to those enjoined on mourners and widows. No woman may wear flowers in her hair nor use the vermilion paint in the parting of her hair which is a sign of her married status. She should also leave off wearing the iron bangle which is another symbol of her marriage, and she must not bathe. At the present day, although the first two prohibitions are observed, there is some slackness about the others. But the main responsibility for placating the possibly malevolent influences residing in the forest rests with the *dihri*, or hunt priest. This is a special office, and the name is evidently the same as the Khond *dehuri* and the Ho *dihiri*, or priest. Among the Santals the *dihri* is a priest only at the time of the hunt, and he is appointed for the *pargana*. On the morning of the day when the hunt opens he performs the sacrifice of a brown hen on the edge of the forest which will be entered, and the tribal spirits are invoked to protect the men from wild beasts. He is encouraged by the spectators, who remind him that if any of them comes to harm they will hold him responsible. At times a certain amount of mimic hunting takes place in connection with the sacrifice, during which the *dihri* plays the part of the hunted animal.

The hunt lasts through the greater part of the day. The forest is surrounded by parties from different villages and the game gradually driven towards the centre. Within living memory the stock of game in most parts of the area has declined, and some of the hunts are now poorly attended for

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sand on the pathways becomes unbearably hot for our feet. Pigs were killed at dawn, cut, and the meat was roasted first thing so that it would be ready when the people returned home. The day turned out to be very warm. Some men went into the village of G—— because of their thirst to get a drink of beer, and they said: 'One pice worth of beer from G—— is as good as six pice of beer from that other place.' " The market is the main shopping centre for the villagers. There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths, purveyors of "medicines" and many others display their wares. The Santals may have grain for sale in a good year; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly, with other commodities at need. The market is a great place for the exchange of gossip, for meeting friends and relatives; it is here that many flirtations begin and matches are set in hand.

Nevertheless, the main business of the Santals' life, round which most of their activities centre, is to wrest from the poor soil the greatest possible amount of food. The struggle leaves little time for philosophizing, but they do sometimes crystallize in a phrase some bitter lesson from experience, as when they say: "Rain in the morning, like a friendship that is easily made, does not last." They work as hard as their social obligations allow. There is nothing distinctive in their methods of agriculture, and for generations they have been accustomed to settled cultivation and the use of the plough. The division of labour between men and women, the taboo against women handling the plough, they share with the surrounding culture. They observe the same propitious days and seasons for sowing and reaping as their neighbours. A great authority on the Santals has said:[1] "They are on their way to becoming agriculturalists, but are, as yet, far behind. . . . They have not as yet learnt the need for and the benefits of weeding and manuring, or of changing the crops, and much more. For example, they do not take proper care of their cattle. These are mostly herded by children, who use much of the time for their own games and pleasures. When the paddy is harvested, the cattle are permitted to roam about. A direct result of this is that it is impossible for people to have any crops standing after the middle of December or thereabouts; the cattle would

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. III, "How the Santals live", *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 434.

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which are longer than the base, contain the finger-holes. Another instrument in the use of which many of the men are proficient is the *banam*,[1] a one-string fiddle. The bowl is hollowed out from a piece of wood or formed sometimes from half a coconut, and it is usually covered with goat skin, though occasionally there are specimens covered with monkey skin, which is prized for the purpose. The bowl is pressed against the player's armpit and the bow is drawn across the string with the right hand, while the fingers of the left hand depress the string at the required point. The string of the fiddle is in these days generally a metal wire. The whole instrument is about eighteen inches long. It is a difficult instrument from which to produce a melody, and it is therefore used chiefly to accompany men's songs with a somewhat monotonous form of "seconds".

The most conspicuous of the musical instruments of the Santals, both for size and volume of sound, are the drums. The two kinds in common use are played together. They are known as the *tumdak'* and the *tamak*.[2] They are beaten at dances by the younger men, who drum and leap about in front of the lines of dancing women and girls. The *tumdak'* is made of burnt clay and is somewhat conical in shape. The narrow end is usually covered with goat skin and the wide end with bullock hide. These end coverings are kept in place by narrow leather strips running the length of the drum, and other strips are wound round the drum. It is suspended by thongs from the shoulders of the youth who is playing it. He beats out the main rhythm with his right hand on the narrow end, and the left hand beats a deeper note on the broad end to punctuate the bars. The *tamak* is a kettle-drum made of iron in the shape of a bowl and covered with bullock hide. In addition to being used as an accompaniment for the *tumdak'*, it is also the hunting drum. It is slung from the shoulders of the player and beaten with a pair of sticks. A variant of the *tamak* is the *lepda*,[3] which has a flat bottom. The *dhāk*[4] is a large long drum hollowed out of wood. This drum is in popular use at weddings and also at large dancing gatherings. It has to be carried by two men and is slung from a bamboo pole which they carry on their shoulders. It is the reverberations of this drum which can be heard throughout the surrounding countryside.

With the exception of the *sarpa* and the cymbals, women do

[1] See illustration opposite.
[2] See illustration opposite.
[3] See illustration opposite.
[4] See illustration next page.

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not learn to play any of these instruments. Young girls may be seen sometimes trying out their brothers' instruments, but they put them away with childish things. Their singing is, however, their peculiar glory. Not only do they sing while dancing, but on many other occasions. As the women of a village return home in the evening from their visit to the weekly market or after a day of gathering leaves in the forest, their high- and soft-toned singing can be heard coming over the fields. During the transplantation of the rice seedlings they sing as they bend over their task. Their songs during this activity are of a special class known as *hephel'*, a word which means the plucking of the seedlings and weeding. Men also sing, and when one is narrating the traditions of the tribe or relating a story he will often break into song to illustrate a point or amplify the story. Santal melodies are as a rule pitched high and in a minor key. The range of the tunes is meagre and rarely makes use of more than three or four different notes in the scale. One unfailing characteristic is a long-drawn-out succession of repeated single notes at the end of each line. Nevertheless, they afford scope for the expression of the dominant emotions experienced by the Santals, whose devotion to dancing and song has developed among them a high degree of musical aptitude. In order that they may easily and quickly memorize the great number of different rhythms with which they have to be familiar, they have invented a series of mnemonics which they repeat at the opening of a dance or a song. One example of such mnemonics, associated with the *doṅ* dances, is as follows:[1]

"Bhendaṅ netaṅ | dak' taṅ netaṅ | din dupuṅ | din dupuṅ—
bhendaṅ netaṅ | dak' taṅ netaṅ | dak' dupuṅ | dak' dupuṅ."

[1] Bodding's *Dictionary*, Vol. II, p. 112.

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A fourteen-year-old boy who was once asked his name replied: "By my name I cannot do anything." Pressed for some explanation of his words, he said: "By my name I cannot walk." It was then explained by some bystanders that the name by which he was known was *Leḍha*, "the lame one". There is a large number of figurative and hidden names for common objects. These names are used in conversation between those who are in the joking relationship with one another and particularly at the time of weddings. "White horse" is beer and "red horse" is spirits; "sheep's *ghi*"[1] is salt; "jackal's horn" is pepper; "frog spawn" is water. "We are sweeping the courtyard" means that we are washing our teeth; "Have you taken the harrow over the field?" means Have you brushed your hair? "Have you married off your middle son?" means Have you eaten your rice? There are many phrases to describe the evacuation of waste products from the body, one of which may be quoted. A man excuses himself from the company of his fellows with the words, "I am going to pay my rent!"

The Santal love of colour and decoration also gives expression to their sense of the joyous in life. Men are sparing in the use of personal adornment, though youths wearing ear-rings or necklaces made from seeds pass without remark. Women are fond of ornaments. Most of them wear a small flower-shaped brass ornament in the left side of the nose and have brass ear-rings. They all wear a *hasli* of silver or brass, a large ring that hangs round the neck. Bangles of silver, shell or glass are worn. They delight to fix flowers of red and white in their hair, and they enhance the lines of their eyes with a dark paste. On special occasions some of the heavier ornaments are brought out—large bell-shaped ear-rings, silver ornaments for the hair, anklets and rings for the feet and toes. The women also decorate the houses with gay-coloured patterns. The houses receive a new plaster coat of earth at the end of the rainy season in preparation for the Harvest festival. The house plinth or veranda and the wall up to a foot or two above the plinth are plastered a very dark grey, the colour being prepared by mixing cowdung with straw ash. Above this dark colour, on a first coat of light earth, the housewives vie with one another to attract the attention of their fellow villagers and of passers-by. There is no uniformity and the colours used depend rather on the coloured clays that are available in the neighbourhood of the village, but red predominates. Some house walls give

[1] Clarified butter.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 50]

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When it has been established that a witch is at work and that she lives in a certain house or village, the villagers of the sick person proceed to the *jan*, or witchfinder, who must give precise information about the individual who is a witch. None of the *jans* in the area are Santals, but the latter consult them quite freely. These men are notorious for having their scouts in the countryside, and they manage to secure all the information that they require before the party of villagers comes to them. They uphold their reputation not only by finding witches, but through being credited with second sight in other matters. They are consulted about lost and stolen property and about straying cattle.

All the witches of the Santals are women. This suggests that women find some compensation in a "private" cult for the fact that they are cut off from active participation in the tribal worship of the spirits. The general term for a witch is *ḍɑn*, and ordinarily the *ḍɑn* is reputed to be a member of a secret society with its own ritual and magic. Undoubtedly there are women who believe themselves to be *ḍɑn*. The *ḍɑn ḍhɑkin* is one who possesses some kind of evil nature and is able to put the "evil eye" on others. The fear of these witches is responsible for the fact that Santal houses are built without windows. When sometimes they leave an opening in the wall, they see that it is very small and so placed that no person standing outside will be able to look at any of the individuals inside, especially at night. The *ḍɑn jugin* are persons who use magic and know sorcery.[1] They acquire influence over certain *boŋgas*, and they make use of material objects in doing so. One of the tasks of an *ojha* who declares that there are buried *boŋgas* at work in a house is to locate them. He finds them buried in the house or the courtyard in the form of stones with human hair tied to them. The *ḍɑn* can gain control of a person and cause madness, a point that is well brought out in a story that is related here in the form in which it was told. "There was a youth in our village about sixteen years old, named Monmotha. One day last year he was going through the jungle from Calta to Beltwala; he returned at about noon, and on his way he had to pass a *boŋga than*. As he was passing it he was struck with fear, and when he reached home he was out of his senses and began to talk a

[1] The distinction between witchcraft as an influence and sorcery as a magic art using material objects made by E. Evans Pritchard in *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford University Press) seems to find some correspondence here.

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CHAPTER 14

THE NEW COMMUNITY

The Santal Christian community is more than an aggregate of individuals who have broken off from the tribe or have been born of parents who did so. It possesses a social life of its own; the individuals and families who compose it have opened their lives to a new influence and with it to a system of ideas that is capable of establishing a pattern of social behaviour distinct from the old. The new pattern will not be different in every respect from the old, which has much of value to contribute and which still exercises a powerful influence in certain directions. By examining the main trends in the present life of one particular community we may not be able to forecast what the pattern will be when Santals in far greater numbers have entered the Church, but we should be able to see the outlines of development in the years immediately ahead.

The great majority of the Santal Christians in the area have retained their status as villagers and cultivators. Their economic interests and activities are the same as those of their non-Christian neighbours. They toil for their daily bread and have to rely on the same aptitudes, skill and intelligent foresight and they earn respect according to the degree in which they display them. They maintain the traditional division of labour between men and women. The men plough the fields and repair their houses; they cut the trees of the forest and cart timber to the railway station. As the long lines of bullock carts enveloped in a cloud of red dust bump over the country roads, one finds here and there in the line a Christian man urging on his pair of bullocks. In bad years when a crowd of men are thronging round the office of the local police station to receive their cultivation loans from the government the Christians take their turn with the rest. The women do the work of the house and take the customary share in the cultivation of the fields and in the food-gathering activities of the village women. The men play their part in the annual hunts and the heads of the household sit with the rest of the villagers in the councils of the village and the tribe.

In spite of the common interests and activities which bind the villagers together irrespective of religious allegiance, the Santal Christian is immediately aware of certain tensions which issue progressively in a breaking away from the old way of life.